

# **Luther and Justification**

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**Lecture I.** Approaches: Forensic or Effective

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# Lecture I

## Approach

In the introductory speech at the graduation debate between Palladius and Tilemann on June 1, 1537, in Wittenberg, over which he presided, Martin Luther made the following remark among others:

The article of justification is master and prince, the Lord, the ruler and one judge over all kinds of doctrines; it preserves and governs all church doctrine and raises up our conscience before God. Without this article the world is utter death and darkness.\*<sup>1</sup>

These words show how highly the reformer treasured the doctrine of justification, not only as the most central and fundamental article of all Christian doctrine but also as the most central and fundamental article in the life of every person, especially in his life before God. If this assessment is correct, and we will soon see that it is, then we have every reason to deal intensively and completely with the doctrine of justification. This doctrine will now be more fully explained from two sides.

## Contemporary Importance

The starting point of the doctrine of justification is an individual's *Grundgebeensein* - his basic human condition. This is something which concerns every individual and which no one can avoid, namely, his accountability before God. Each and every one must be accountable to God. The reason for this is that we are the creation of God and because God who has created us is God and will always remain God. We stand, therefore, before the all decisive question of whether we are righteous before God in this accountability. When we talk about God and when we are concerned about our accountability before Him, then His dimension becomes apparent. It is the dimension of eternity. Whether we stand or not determines not only our lives here on this earth but also our eternal destiny which is determined here and now. For the God with whom we deal is God from eternity to eternity. If the doctrine of justification answers that all-important question, namely, how we are able to stand justified before God, then it becomes quite apparent that we should concern ourselves also today intensively with this teaching. The answer to this fundamental moving question of our existence can never be clear and unambiguous enough.

Besides the foregoing reason which is deeply rooted in creation and in the human existence of every one of us, there is a second reason which compels us to make an especially intensive study of the doctrine of justification now. This is the fact that the answer to this question - how a person can stand before God, i.e. how a person is righteous before God - is in our time no longer unequivocally given by all those who claim to belong to the Lutheran Church. For centuries the answer viewed as a whole was clear: a person is righteous before God because God forgives his sins in the Gospel for the sake of the passive and the active obedience of Christ. And for that reason righteousness is credited to him and is grasped by faith. Justification was understood as an event (action) in which the person stood before God and received a judgement from God which decided his temporal and eternal destiny. It is important to note concerning this judgment that it declares a person who believes in Christ to be righteous. In and of himself, however, he has nothing that can be considered as good or righteous as it should be. The Lutheran Church has referred to justification as a forensic act because God has passed judgment on a person.

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\*Note on Sources: Several editions of Luther's works are cited in these lectures. The main source is *Luther's Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*; Weimar, 1883 ff. This edition, the most universally cited, is usually referred to as the Weimar Ausgabe, abbreviated WA. Also cited is the St. Louis edition (1880ff.) of the so-called Old Walch of 1740ff. The St. Louis edition is cited here as W<sup>2</sup>. The American Edition of Luther's Works (1955ff.), which in 53 volumes, is very selective, is cited when the WA and W<sup>2</sup> citations are found translated therein.

<sup>1</sup> WA 39 I, 205, 2-5. Translation from Ewald, M. Plass, *What Luther Says*, St. Louis, II, 703.

Today to a large extent this is taught differently. Justification is presented not only as a forensic act, but also as an action in which the individual is actually transformed into a new creature - one who is actually righteous. Justification is therefore not only to be understood as *forensic* in the sense of a judgment but also as *effective* in the sense of an action. It is not only a *declaration* of righteousness but also a *making* righteous. The two concepts are thus inherently different. To make righteous refers to the inner transformation through which the person who has been declared righteous becomes righteous even though he is not perfect. In this last sense the expression "to become righteous" is understood in the same sense as the terms "pious" and "pure."

So that what I have just said does not remain a mere assertion I would like to give proof of this same line of thought with a few citations. I will refer to the most important representative of this school of thought, whose writings, which have been deeply influential in Germany, have also been widely distributed in the USA. His works are numbered among standard works of Lutheran theology. I am referring to Edmund Schlink and his book *The Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*. Listen to a few passages:

It was already pointed out that, according to the Apology, justification *is not only forgiveness and the imputation of righteousness but also a making righteous and a regeneration*. For the sinner whom God declares righteous is righteous before God in God's judgment and, therefore, in truth and reality, even though he himself and all the world see nothing of his renewal and righteousness. However, the Lutheran Confessions do not permit us to stop with this interpretation of making righteous and of regeneration. The statement "*ex injustis justos efficit*" is rendered in the German text of the Apology with "to be converted or regenerated" (Ap. IV, 72), "to be changed from a sinner to a pious man and to be born again by the Holy Spirit" (Ap. IV, 78), "unrighteous men become righteous, holy . . ." (Ap. IV, 117). Luther answers the question as to "how one is justified before God," by stating first that ". . . by faith (as St. Peter says) we get a new and clean heart. . ." (S.A. III, xiii, 1). With these statements about justification as making righteous and as regeneration, justification, as shall be shown in detail in the following, is no longer taught merely as a reality in the judgment of God, but as a change of man, as a change of man also in man's judgment. As faith "renews and changes the heart" (Ap. IV, 125), so justification is also regeneration, that is, renewal and transformation of the sinner.<sup>2</sup>

It would be a denial of the truth and reality of the thoughts and words of God in which he imputes and bestows, if pronouncing righteous were not at the same time designated as making righteous, and if the nonimputation of sin were not also called regeneration.

If the sinner is declared righteous by God, he is not only regarded as righteous; he *is* righteous.

Whoever is somewhat familiar with the history of dogma and the different teachings of Christian churches will certainly question whether this manner of teaching the doctrine of justification does not approach what is taught by the Roman Catholic Church in the Council of Trent. Is it not also obvious there that justification comes from the forgiveness of sins and is in fact a making righteous? Is it not taught there that an essential ingredient of justification is that the person who is declared righteous is in fact righteous?<sup>3</sup> One cannot simply dismiss this question, even though one recognizes the differences. Human cooperation in the preparation and reception of justification is, of course, excluded in this new form in which justification is taught among some Lutherans. The action which changes man is also understood to have been worked for the sake of the merits of Christ alone through the Word of the Gospel which as the Word of God works righteousness. Likewise they maintain the fact that the Christian is righteous and a sinner at the same time. But despite these

<sup>2</sup> Edmund Schlink, *The Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, Tr. Paul F. Koenecke and Herbert J. A. Bouman, Philadelphia, 1961, Ch. IV, p. 106f. The following two references are found in Chapter III, p. 94f.

<sup>3</sup> e.g. Session VI, Ch. 7: "...The single formal cause is the Justice of God, not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which He makes us just, that, namely, with which we being endowed by him are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and not only are we reputed but we are truly called and are just ...." *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, H. J. Schroeder, ed., St. Louis, B. Herder, 1941

distinctions, justification consists in the fact that God also effects an inner transformation and new creation. For that reason it is not a surprise that today it is often maintained that there is actually agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church on the doctrine of justification, not least of all with reference to this new form of the doctrine of justification among Lutherans. This agreement is documented in this way in the official report of the Evangelical/Lutheran/Roman Catholic study commission entitled "The Gospel and the Church" (the so-called Malta report):

Today a wide consensus in the interpretation of justification stands out clearly. Even Catholic theologians emphasize in the question of justification that God's gift of salvation to those who believe is not tied to any human conditions. The Lutheran theologians emphasize that the act of justification is not limited to the individual forgiveness of sins and they do not see in it a declaration of the sinner's righteousness which remains purely external. Rather through the proclamation of justification the righteousness of God, which is realized in the Christ-event, is transferred to the sinner as a reality which completely encompasses him and thereby a new life of faith is established.<sup>4</sup>

It is clear from this agreement that even according to the opinion of the study commission not every difference could be simply pushed aside, for example, the meaning and importance of justification. However when considering the statements of this study one must question what is actually happening. Has the Lutheran church given up an important part of her former doctrine of justification so that one has to speak of it as a surrender or a falsification of the same? Or has she in her history actually taught the doctrine of justification in a too one-sided, too exaggerated, and in the final analysis even a false way? Does she then have to correct herself? Or have both churches for the past 450 years spoken past each other when they dealt with their differences concerning the doctrine of justification? Is there perhaps only a difference in the presentation and not in the basic meaning?

The overwhelming tendency of the answers which are received to this question favor a one-sided, exaggerated, and therefore basically inappropriate portrayal of justification in the Lutheran church of the past. This is traced back to the Formula of Concord and to the Lutheran orthodoxy which was inspired by it. They say that the Formula of Concord has abbreviated the doctrine of justification, thereby making it into something outside of the person's being. The Formula has thereby not adequately presented Luther's as well as Melancthon's interpretation, as it is expressed in the early confessional writings. In a widely-used survey of dogmatics in Germany one reads:

In opposition to the extrinsic [external, objective] abbreviation of justification of the Formula of Concord and Orthodoxy, in modern Evangelical theology all emphasis concerning the Reformation doctrine of justification has been laid on the fact that justification actually creates within a person what it claims to create. R. Prenter emphasizes: 'If. . . forgiveness is promised to a sinner and he trusts in this promise, then he is not only considered righteous in an outward sense but he is righteous in the fullest sense!' E. Schlink represents the Lutheran Confessions with this thesis: Justification is not only a crediting of the works of Christ but also a regeneration and cannot remain without a new obedience.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cited according to Harding Meyer, *Luthertum und Katholizismus im Gespräch* [Lutheranism and Catholicism in Dialogue], Frankfurt, 1973, p. 152f. In the commentary on the text of the study commission, Meyer elaborates: "This consensus which theological and ecumenical research had worked out in the last two decades especially was almost presupposed by the study commission; in reality, they only substantiated and affirmed it. In agreement with the Reformation doctrine of justification, the Catholics emphasize 'that God's gift of salvation for the believer is not connected to any human condition,' so the Lutherans distanced themselves from a one-sided forensic understanding of justification, which had always been the object of Catholic criticism and doctrinal condemnation above all, in Trent. Declaration of righteousness and making righteous are not to be separated from each other. If God pronounces the sinner righteous, then this is not a declaration of righteousness which remains purely external, but an action which affects the individual, a creative act which means for the one who is justified the beginning of a new life which is lived out in the personal, as well as in the social sphere" (Op. cit., p. 52).

<sup>5</sup> Horst Georg Pöhlmann, *Abriss der Dogmatik* [outline of Dogmatics], 2nd Edition, Gütersloh, 1975, p. 224.

This accusation that the Formula of Concord has made justification into something which is outside of a person's being and thus abbreviated it means that the unity of the Lutheran Confessions in this matter is dissolved and that the early confessions and above all Luther are invoked in opposition to the Formula of Concord. As a result all of that great work of unification which came about through the Formula of Concord after the death of Luther would have to be questioned.

I believe that what I have said is already enough to show the need for concerning ourselves now with a thorough study of the doctrine of justification. First, I mentioned the fundamental meaning which this doctrine has for each person of all time - that it concerns his eternal salvation now and on the Last Day. Second, I referred to the present situation in theology and the church in which a new definition of justification, which is contrary to the former position, has gained acceptance in the Lutheran Church - that justification is not only a declaration of righteousness but also an inner transformation and a making righteous. Both of these elements are closely related. If the church's answer to this fundamental question of human salvation is different from what it was before, then the certainty of the answer for the individual is brought into question. It is, however, precisely the question of certainty which concerns not only each one of us but also the proclamation of the church.

Our certainty before God can finally be based only on the Word, in which God Himself, in the Holy Scriptures through the apostles and prophets, indeed through Christ Himself, has spoken to us and continues to speak to us. It is our task first and foremost to concern ourselves with the Holy Scriptures as God's Word. But certainly - in commemorating the Reformation and in this 500th anniversary year of Luther's birth - we should not fail to inquire of the man who as no one else in the history of the church learned justification from the Scripture and grasped it in its depth: Martin Luther.

### **Preliminary Remarks**

If one is to concern himself with Luther and his works today one is compelled to make a few preliminary remarks. I will make them as briefly as possible.

Modern Luther scholarship has a tendency to put too much stress on the so-called "young Luther" (prior to 1519). During these years the new ideas of the Reformation certainly were appearing. It must, however, be emphasized that one must study the whole Luther in its entirety and not limit oneself to a certain time or aspect of his life. As important as it is to bring to light the history of the development of the Reformer, it is decisive to know what he himself (partly by correcting himself) taught the church from Holy Scriptures and what he further clarified in the face of errors and counterarguments during the many disputes of the Reformation and later in the battle for the preservation of the Reformation doctrines. Especially here, Luther in his later years can help us to avoid many misunderstandings.<sup>6</sup>

Luther's exceptionally lively spirit sized up each situation fully and each time he formulated the matter in a new way. This compels us to read his writings which pertain to a biblical matter with which he dealt in their entirety and not only to look at isolated concepts or ideas. Thus with him as also with Reformation hermeneutics, context was king. Variations in terminology do not indicate in themselves a real difference in meaning.

Many of his lectures and sermons were not published by Luther himself but were compiled on the basis of transcripts by his co-workers and students. Viewed as a whole they reproduce very well the view of the Reformer. At certain points, however, there are problems, especially when dealing with individual formulations. These should be dealt with in the context of the works which Luther himself personally published.

### **The Context: Creation and Consummation in Accordance with the will of God**

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<sup>6</sup> A return to the complete Luther in Luther research is advanced also by Karl-Henz zur Mühlen in his research report "On the Investigation of the 'young Luther' since 1876," in *Lutherjahrbuch 1983*, p. 121.

For people of our time who are to a large extent disoriented in the world in which they live and do not know from whence they have come from and whither they are going, it is important to know the context of the assertions which Luther made concerning justification. This is the entire context of creation and consummation. As individuals we are set into this context in which we are bound together with all mankind, coming from creation and moving toward consummation. In a sermon about law and gospel Luther expressed this context in just a few words. He said:

And Christ wishes this doctrine to be observed by the Christians so that they may know what they have been, what they are still lacking and what they should again become, that they do not continue in the misery and filth in which they find themselves now; for if they do, they must be lost.<sup>7</sup>

**What we have been** - this leads us to look back on the past out of which we have come-from God's creation, out of which man emerged pure, holy and righteous. "In Paradise you were in possession of the treasure and were so created that you could love God with all your heart."<sup>8</sup>

**What we are still lacking** - this leads us to look on our present situation. As Christians we are found lacking in keeping God's law, in loving God with our whole heart and in being obedient to him. By nature we cannot do these things and therefore we are lost. Christ, however, has come to redeem us and to bring us back so that we can love God and our neighbor with our whole heart. "This is to be done fully and perfectly in the future life but here in this life it should be begun."

**What we should again become** - this leads us to look toward the future at which time God at the end of our days and history will create us and the world completely new, so that we will then perfectly fulfill His law. "For in the life beyond there will be no longer any faith, but perfect love, and all that the Law demands we will do with our whole heart."

In this sequence, i.e., **what we have been, what we are still lacking, and what we should again become**, there are a few things to which we should refer to and which we do not want to overlook.

Luther makes it clear here that from the beginning and into all eternity man has to deal with the will of God. In Paradise he keeps the will of God heartily and finds himself in complete harmony with God's commands. After the fall he is exceedingly disobedient and falls into one sin after another. God's law declares him guilty and in addition it demands complete obedience. As Christians we keep the law even though only in an elementary manner and in great weakness. In eternity however, this beginning of the fulfillment of the law will be changed into a complete accord with the will of God. Man is never set free from the will of God. The only difference lies in the relationship that a man has with the will of God. In a time when God's law, even among Christians, is widely considered as abolished and is looked at in a negative way, we should take special note of these facts.

The theologians here, and especially the exegetes among them, have probably already taken note that the terms **God's command, God's law** and **God's will**, have been used interchangeably up to this point. Of course, Luther knew that these concepts of the Bible in their context take on completely different meanings. This is certainly quite apparent in the disputes which Luther had with his adversaries, especially concerning the concept of the law in its different meanings. If he lets the terms law, command, and the will of God merge with each other - just as the Formula of Concord also did at a later date - and if he even can talk about the law as the eternal, immovable and unchangeable will of God, then he has learned this from Paul. The apostle explains in the first three chapters of the letter to the Romans that the whole world is guilty of not keeping the Mosaic law. Paul does not refer thereby to the political and ceremonial statements but only to the moral law. Thus it follows

<sup>7</sup> WA 45, 157, 17-20; W<sup>2</sup> 11, 1701, J. N. Lenker, *Luther's Works: Sermons*, Vol. 14, (Gospels: Vol. V), p. 186.

<sup>8</sup> WA 45, 156, 29f.; W<sup>2</sup> 11, 1701. The two following citations are found in the same place, WA 148, 29f, and 148, 31f., W<sup>2</sup>, 1703 and Lenker, 185 and 187.

that the moral content of the law of Moses, as it can be summarized in the Ten Commandments, is actually valid for all people of all time.

The few sentences which I have cited show something of the passion with which Luther, in this sermon, urged Christians to keep the law of God. Certainly this is connected to the situation at that time in which the great antinomian controversy was raging. The false understanding of freedom and the licentiousness of many evangelicals also gave the Reformer much work to do. One would, however, misunderstand him if one believed that this passionate emphasis that Christians, even if only in an elementary and weak way, should really keep the law, were directed only to that specific situation. Luther knew that the one who is saved does not remain in the misery and filth of sin. That is connected to the fact that God does not want sin and that Christ did not come so that we can sin more but rather as redeemed children of God serve him heartily. He who does not realize this has not grasped what God and Christ mean.

Let us now take one more look at the end of the quotation from Luther's sermon which has already been cited. There, looking toward the past, present and future, he says: "that they continue not in the misery and filth in which they find themselves now; for if they do they must be lost." These words clearly express the fact that there is actually only one great either/or which is given to man: either to remain in the misery and filth of sin or to come out of it. If he does not successfully come out but remains in this misery and filth, then he is certainly lost. It is certainly not inevitable that a man progresses from the perfection of creation, past the fall into sin, to a beginning state of righteousness and finally to perfection. Men can certainly remain in the misery and filth of sin and be lost eternally. There are only two possibilities, either salvation or condemnation which a man in his lifetime and mankind throughout history will have to face. This makes the question of salvation from sin extremely pressing and serious.

What Luther says to the congregation in the sermon on law and gospel which I have cited (incidentally, a very important sermon), he writes in the theses cited at the beginning of this lecture. They were written in a way in which we too can gain a further knowledge of the comprehensive use of the concepts of justification and righteousness.

16. The law is fulfilled in a twofold sense, that is, through faith and through love.
17. Through faith it is fulfilled in this life when God for the time being, graciously credits us with the righteousness won by Christ or the fulfillment of the law.
18. Through love it will be fulfilled in that life because we will be perfect as new creatures of God.
19. However, saying that the law will be fulfilled there is said improperly, since then there will be no law, because what the law demands in this life will itself be there.
20. However, so that one may understand the matter more clearly, we must speak in a clumsy manner because of our weak ability to perceive in this life.
21. For just as the holy Augustine truly said: three and seven do not have to equal ten, they are ten.
22. What by nature has a certain quality, that must not, indeed it cannot be or become such through a law.
23. Thus the angels and saints in heaven should not be righteous, but on the contrary, they are righteous without a law, as a pure creature of God.
24. For then even faith itself, the crediting of God, the forgiveness of sins, in addition to the whole office of the Spirit will cease.
25. We will no longer use or need any Lord's prayer, confession of faith or sacraments.
26. Even more than this the law itself will cease and be abrogated with all its knowledge and prophecy along with all Scripture.
27. For God will be all in all and wonderful in His saints and we will be His perfect, pure, and new creatures.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> WA 39 I 203, 14-37; W<sup>2</sup> 19, 1456f.

Luther is speaking here about the twofold manner in which one fulfills the law, namely, in this life through faith and in eternal life through love. We will concentrate our attention on this second way of fulfilling the law with which Luther dealt. In that life the law is considered fulfilled, so that in eternity we will actually with and before God do what the law requires and demands. As a newly created, perfect, and pure creature of God we will love completely with our whole being. This future reality which we cannot now even imagine can indeed only improperly be called a fulfillment of the law. Always intertwined with the term law is the idea of demand. Here, however, what is demanded is already fulfilled. It is fulfilled without the compulsion of the law because through the creating action of God it has become a part of the nature of man. Here is where the example of Augustine fits in, that is, that seven and three do not have to demand to be ten, they are ten. They are ten in and of themselves. In this same way angels in heaven are not obliged to be righteous, they simply *are* righteous. In other words, the force and compulsion of the law is absent, but its contents are kept with joy because one cannot do otherwise.

I can imagine that some Lutherans, especially if they belong to the Werner Elert school of thought, would at this point protest. Is not Christ the end of the law? Did not Luther untiringly point out that we are dead to the law? Does that not mean that the law becomes the end of man's access to God and the Gospel merely a means of help to fulfill that law of God? We will have to come back to this question a little later. First we have to take note of a fundamental thought which Luther had and one which I believe is also important for us. The law with which we have to deal here is the will of God. Its contents clearly express what His creation should be and how it was originally created. God's creation should be in accord with God and with his image. Therefore also in the new creation God will not create anything which is foreign to Him but what He creates will be in accord with Him. When Luther said that the law, prophecy, knowledge and Scripture will cease, he gave as a basis for this that God will be all in all and wonderful in His saints. This simply means that men will be so filled with God and with His being that these other things will no longer be necessary. It is just this accord with God which comes to expression in the contents of the law. Therefore a Christian life which bypasses the law as God's will and an expression of His image is also a life which bypasses God Himself. The fact that God puts His will into action in us means nothing else than that God is God and remains so.

We also want to come to a deeper understanding of one of the expressions taken from the already cited Luther quotation. What really is righteousness? If we use the word today we understand it in this way, for example, that a teacher deals with all his pupils in the same way and does not show favoritism to one or the other. Luther, however, uses the word righteousness in a different way. In thesis 17 he speaks about the "righteousness won by Christ or the fulfillment of the law." The little word "or" clearly shows here that fulfillment of the law is just another expression for righteousness. Christ is righteous because He is completely in accord with the will of God. Righteousness is nothing other than accord or agreement with God's will or law<sup>10</sup>, in all our hearts, thoughts, in everything we are and in everything that we do. If Luther's formulation in the thesis is that the law is perfectly fulfilled through love in that future life then he could have expressed it also in this way, namely, that we would be perfectly righteous in that future life. In fact he speaks in this way in other places, for example, in the Commentary on Galatians (1531) with reference to chapter 5 verse 5:

But we are not yet righteous. Our being justified perfectly still remains to be seen, and this is what we hope for. Thus our righteousness does not yet exist in fact, but it still exists in hope.<sup>11</sup>

That simply means nothing other than that as Christians living on earth we are in no way what we should be. We have surely begun to do the will of God but we are still not in perfect accord with Him. We are awaiting "the consummation of perfect righteousness in heaven."<sup>12</sup> Righteousness is thus living in accord with the law of God, so that we are what God would have us to be. In this context it is also well to note that when referring to

<sup>10</sup> The following also: "*Iustitia est officium respectu superioris, quo obeditur eius verbo.*" WA 5, 303, 25; W<sup>2</sup> 4, 705: "Justification is a service which occurs with respect to someone superior, by which one is obedient to his word."

<sup>11</sup> WA 40 II, 24, 20-22; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 624, LW 27, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> WA 40 II, 25, 25; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 625, LW 27, p. 22.



the action in which God transforms us through His creating power Luther uses the verb *iustificare*, i.e., to make righteous. The corresponding noun and adjective *gerecht* (righteous) and *justus* describe a person who is righteous in all of his existence, being, and action; i.e., a person who is in complete accord with the will of God. Thus there is a meaning which Luther uses for the word *iustificare* which must be translated "to make righteous" in the sense of an inner transformation or renewal. In this sense the word is used not only for the future, perfect transformation in eternity but also of the Christians in this world. Again it must be noted that man is never without God's law or will without being in accord with God; either the law is fulfilled or - if not - man is lost.

### **The Fundamental Difference Between *Saving* Justification and the Justification Which *Fulfills* God's Will**

The assertion with which the last section closed is basically a foregone conclusion. It follows from the fact that man as a creation of God always remains drawn to his Creator. That I am in agreement with the will of the one who has created me, with whom I am in accord and before whom I am righteous, that is the age old question with which we are concerned here. It is only such a life - one which lets God stand in its center, which lives from Him and to Him - which lets God be who He is - God.

This fact stands in opposition to the other one - that all men since Adam have turned away from God and have placed themselves in the center of their lives. They are *incurvati in se*, that is they have turned in toward themselves and are not directed toward God. They cannot and they do not want to do the will of God and keep His law, especially that which is at the heart of His will: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself." They are sinners not only in their particular actions but also in their whole person. Therefore they are under the wrath and curse of God and will remain so throughout eternity, if salvation does not come.

Luther experienced his own sinfulness and felt his condemnation under the wrath of God in his own heart and conscience. We have many deeply moving personal testimonies about Luther's experiences. Probably the best known is found in the explanation of the 95 theses. There he says about himself:

I myself 'knew a man' who claimed that he had often suffered these punishments, in fact over a very brief period of time. Yet they were so great and so much like hell that no tongue could adequately express them, no pen could describe them, and one who had not himself experienced them could not believe them. And so great were they that, if they had been sustained or had lasted for half an hour, even for one tenth of an hour, he would have perished completely and all of his bones would have been reduced to ashes. At such a time there is no flight, no comfort, within or without, but all things accuse. At such a time as that the Psalmist mourns, "I am cut off from thy sight," or at least he does not dare to say, "O Lord,. . . do not chasten me in thy wrath." In this moment (strangely to say) the soul cannot believe that it can ever be redeemed other than that the punishment is not yet completely felt. . .<sup>13</sup>

It has often been said that such experiences can be traced back to Luther's extraordinary scrupulousness and his extremely narrow conscience. Certainly he had a very tender and sensitive conscience. However, such experiences cannot be explained away on the basis of Luther's scruples, for in these experiences, Luther does nothing else than take God's Word and will as revealed in the law seriously. Luther did not shorten or soften these demands as had usually been done in earlier times and continues to be done today. Rather he let the demands stand as the Word of God, even if he himself would be lost on account of it. What he experienced is essentially nothing other than what is described in Hebrews 10:31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." There are experiences which we also, although certainly not to such depth, have when we are really confronted by the law of God.

<sup>13</sup> WA 1, 557, 33-558, 3; W<sup>2</sup> 18, 150, LW 31, p. 129.

Allowing the law of God to stand led Luther to realize that all of the ways which were taught him in his early years to come to a gracious God and to be certain of one's salvation failed. One of the most important ways was to enter a monastery. In his later years, the Reformer wrote frequently about his thoughts and the reasons which moved him to become a monk:

In the papacy there was a lot of preaching about sin, death, and hell, and also about the wrath of God. However how could one free himself from all of this? They wanted us to make satisfaction for our sins with good works, repentance and with the life of the cloister and with pilgrimages and masses.

This had been our teaching, that if one were baptized, and after his baptism he were to commit a deadly sin Christ would as a result be of absolutely no use to him. However, do you want to be holy and through repentance become pious then make a beginning and become a monk and martyr yourself with fasting and prayer until you again become a friend to God. For that reason I also went to the cloister.<sup>14</sup>

From these words it is evident how deeply monasticism was embedded in the theological thinking of that day. The adult who in his baptism had made righteousness a part of himself could lose it again through deadly sins.

Only by doing the works of repentance commanded by the church could he once again receive righteousness and have fellowship with God. One of the most certain ways to draw close to God was to enter a monastery. For that reason it was no wonder that as Luther put on the monk's robe and spoke his three vows, the prior could tell him: "If you keep these I promise to you eternal life."<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, it became apparent that even in the monastery the repentance and satisfaction which were required for the validity of forgiveness and righteousness could not be produced in the necessary purity. For that reason salvation remained uncertain in spite of every flight to Mary and to the saints, for in the end Christ was still the Judge.

It cannot be our endeavor here to trace all the different "*Anfechtungen*" [afflictions] through which Luther struggled in the monastery, during his study of theology and also as a doctor and professor. I have only mentioned this one in order to make understandable the question which caused all his affliction and led him to seek the right answer, namely, God's answer. That is the question of how he as a sinner, which he certainly was and remained, despite all his struggles, could stand before a wrathful and righteous God. It is in the answer to this question that the essence of the Reformation is to be found. It must once again be emphasized: Luther's question was not whether a Christian or indeed anyone should live piously before God and according to His will. That was for Luther completely outside of any discussion. In heaven there are no sinners, and since the kingdom of heaven begins here on earth, God's will is at least in an elementary way already done here on earth. Whether and how it happens, however, that someone who is a sinner and can nevertheless be saved by God and can be in the kingdom of heaven, that is the problem. By asking the question about salvation in the clearest way and by finding the answer to it in the Holy Scriptures, an answer which had nothing to do with the struggles and striving of man, Luther discovered the fundamental difference between a saving sanctifying righteousness on the one hand, and a righteousness which fulfills God's law in man on the other hand. The former righteousness is "a divine imputation or reckoning as righteousness or to righteousness, for the sake of our faith in Christ or for the sake of Christ."<sup>16</sup> Saving justification is thereby understood to be something fundamentally different from what was ordinarily understood by justification-as a doing of the law in man which was later called sanctification. The accomplishment of Luther's Reformation is his clear working out of that distinction and the preservation of saving justification over against all opposition, obfuscation and misunderstandings. This is also the same task which the Lutheran church has had until this present day. Our next lecture will be dedicated to this issue.

<sup>14</sup> WA 47, 575, 37-42; W<sup>2</sup> 7, 1310.

<sup>15</sup> WA 51, 83, 9.

<sup>16</sup> WA 40 I 370, 19-21; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 309, LW 26, p. 233.

## Lecture II

### The Matter Itself: The Alone Saving Alien Righteousness

In order to make clear what Luther means when he speaks about justification in the saving sense, I would like to begin by showing what he does not mean and what he rejects. From these facts we can deduce what is essential for him.

#### Erroneous Opinions

Luther's standing objection against the traditional, especially scholastic theologians, is that they mixed philosophy and theology in the question of justification.

They have mixed philosophy and theology by taking up this moral principle: We become righteous because we often do righteous things. We often play the zither and so forth. Then justification is a capability which is achieved by deeds. However in Christ's kingdom just the opposite is the case. There the deeds come out of the capabilities because faith, without works, is prepared before the works. After faith has been prepared the works are brought forth through it.<sup>17</sup>

Luther traces the basic idea against which he is objecting, back to Aristotle: that when someone does something he acquires a capability and an attribute. Someone who spends much time playing the zither will finally become a zither player. What a person could previously neither do nor be will finally be attained only through continuous trial and practice. When this principle is applied to righteousness, an unrighteous man will finally become righteous, because he continually does righteous things. Righteousness is then defined as consisting in doing what is righteous. Luther calls this *iustitia formalis* or *activa* according to the traditional terminology of his day.<sup>18</sup> He does not at all dispute that there is philosophical righteousness in the worldly and political realms. There is a "civil righteousness" or *iustitia civilis*, which should in no way be esteemed lightly. God Himself desires such civil righteousness and protects and rewards it.<sup>19</sup>

In theology, however, which concerns itself with our righteousness before God, this basic philosophical or eternal principle accomplishes nothing. Why not? Because the works which are done in the realm of this civil righteousness are always absolutely insufficient before God. Even if it represents a splendid accomplishment on earth and is worthy of all recognition, such a work is, nevertheless, before God nothing more than "a deception and a Godless hypocrisy."<sup>20</sup> God surely does not want a work that is done out of fear of punishment or with expectation of reward, or put in modern language, out of a need for security before God or a desire for self-realization. He wants a work which flows simply out of that inner binding of the heart and love in which man was created by God and which should fill his whole life. This inner binding of the heart cannot be produced by man as he is now by nature and grows up. He is "flesh born of flesh." Out

<sup>17</sup> Rhapsodia, WA 30 II, 658, 29-33. See also WA 34 I, 473, 24-27; WA 40 I, 402, 18-23; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 338 and WA 40 I, 407, 32f.; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 343, 253 and WA 40 I 409, 30 - 412, 24; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 345-347 and WA 2, 493, 6-14; W<sup>2</sup> 8, 1438f. That also according to Aristotle the individual must first be good before he can do good, Luther says, among other places, WA 42, 608, 47f.; W<sup>2</sup> 1, 1018 and WA 1, 119, 28-36; W<sup>2</sup> 10, 1280.

<sup>18</sup> WA 54, 185-17-20; W<sup>2</sup> 14, 447 (Forward to Vol. 1 of Luther's Latin writings, 1545).

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g. WA 39 I, 82, Theses 1-19; W<sup>2</sup> 19, 1450 or WA 39 I, 202, Theses 1-7; W<sup>2</sup> 19; 1455f. (Series of theses on Romans 3:28).

<sup>20</sup> WA 39 I 82, Thesis 9; W<sup>2</sup> 19, 1451

of this flesh "the spirit does not want to come forth."<sup>21</sup> Whatever one does not only does it not suffice before God but can never suffice before Him, because the presupposition of a good and righteous work certainly is that the person himself is good and righteous. Only a good tree can bring forth good fruit. Therefore the absolutely necessary presupposition for Luther for a good work to be valid before God is the rebirth of the individual. There is no gradual transition of the old man to righteousness and into the kingdom of heaven. Whoever wants to enter the kingdom of heaven must be born again.<sup>22</sup> That basic philosophical principle that one becomes righteous by doing righteous things can, therefore, never be valid in theology which concerns itself with salvation before God.

Nevertheless this basic idea confronts the Reformer time and time again. It arises in all those places where what the Christian is or does, in whatever form, is made to be a part or a presupposition of the righteousness which saves before God. However, whether these works, either in whole or in part are achieved by the power of God's grace, they play no role in saving righteousness. If anything in man is a part of the righteousness which saves him, then it is already false. A passage in Luther's 1531 Galatians Commentary applies this basic principle to scholastic theology. According to their school of thought, the sophists ridicule this description of Christian righteousness which is unknown to human reason.

For they suppose that righteousness is a certain quality that is first infused into the soul and then distributed through all the members. They cannot strip off the thoughts of reason, which declares that righteousness is a right judgment and a right will ...So far as the words are concerned, this fact is easy, namely, that righteousness is not in us in a formal sense, as Aristotle maintains, but is outside us, solely in the grace of God and in His imputation. In us there is nothing of the form or of the righteousness except that weak faith or the first fruits of faith by which we have begun to take hold of Christ. Meanwhile sin truly remains within us.<sup>23</sup>

According to these words one is not permitted to understand the righteousness of a Christian in the sense of a quality which is first infused into the heart by God and then spreads to all members of the person. Righteousness is not inherent in us. If it were, it would mean that our thoughts, desires and feelings, in fact, our whole being is converted by God into just what He wants it to be. But according to Luther, this inner transformation is exactly what saving righteousness is not. This righteousness is outside of us, solely in the grace and imputation of God.

Because Luther thus rejects as a saving work every kind of human work whether it comes out of man's powers or out of the divinely given powers of grace does not mean that he rejects works entirely. It is important and necessary that a person does something. But such works do not save him. "Christ commanded that after a person had done everything, he should confess that we are worthless servants. Therefore we have not earned grace or salvation."<sup>24</sup> To ascribe saving power to works would be to mix philosophical/moral concepts and theological concepts of justification and righteousness. The eventual result of that would be to darken the glory of Jesus

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<sup>21</sup> LKG (*Lutherisches Kirchengesangbuch*) 227, v. 2

<sup>22</sup> See WA 21, 532, 35-38; W<sup>2</sup> 11, 1171 and WA 21, 528, 25-29; W<sup>2</sup> 11, 116

<sup>23</sup> WA 40 I, 370, 21-24, 28-32; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 309f., LW 26, 233f.

<sup>24</sup> WA 30 II, 658, 27f.

Christ and to shake the certainty of salvation.<sup>25</sup> Therefore it is all important to present clearly the true Christian righteousness and justification.

### **Saving Justification**

Before we begin to speak about saving justification, it is helpful to clarify for ourselves the meaning of the word justification. We have seen that Luther could speak of "justification" entirely in the sense of an inner transformation, the creation of a completely new being. But this use of the word, to be sure, does not yet reveal wherein the concept of saving justification consists for him. To do that, I would go back to a meaning of the word "justification" which is still known today. If someone, for example, is accused of a deception, it is necessary to establish whether he is really guilty or not. If, during the course of the investigation, it is proved that the accused is not guilty, then he is "justified." That means that he stands as one who is righteous and is declared to be righteous. The reflexive use of the word is also common in this context: "to justify oneself" means to state or declare that one has done nothing wrong and is completely in the right. One can also justify another person by declaring and showing him to be in the right against all false accusations because he had acted uprightly.

In this sense justification thus means "to declare that someone is righteous." This can occur through a spoken judgment as the result of a court trial; it can also, however, take place in the relationship of two people with each other or in the relationship between an employer and an employee. In this matter it is important and fundamental that in all these acts of justification a certain standard is presumed which is accepted by all the participants as to the difference between good and evil. Whoever meets this standard is justified and whoever does not meet this standard is guilty.<sup>26</sup>

In the Bible, the word justify, besides having other meanings, is also used in this sense. Paul, for example, uses it in Romans 2:13 when he says that those who hear the law will not be justified, but rather, those who do it. In a similar way, immediately before the crucial section concerning justification without the works of the law he says in Romans 3:20: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight."

Consequently the decisive point in this use of the word is whether the person concerned is in accord with the law of God or not, that is, whether he is justified or not. It was this decisive point which was at issue for Luther if he were to stand before God. He knew that to stand before God and to be responsible to God is not just a matter of future judgment on the Last Day. It is here and now and it concerns us daily, for we always stand before God and the question is always that same - whether we are righteous before him or not. When we live according to His will, then He recognizes us as righteous and we are blessed in His fellowship. This blessedness and fellowship with Him will be strengthened and revealed before the eyes of all on the Last

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<sup>25</sup> WA 30, II, 659, 22-24: "For if we are justified on account of the works which follow faith, then we would no longer be justified by faith itself nor for Christ's sake, but rather on account of ourselves who do works after believing. That is to deny Christ."

<sup>26</sup> Werner Elert's opinion, that "to justify" in Luther and in the Apology is to be understood in the sense of the legal jargon of his time (*Die Christliche Glaube* [The Christian Faith] 2nd ed., 1941, p. 576f.) and therefore means *forensis* (the forensic use) in the usage of the reformers. Apology IV, 305 defines the *usus forensis* of "justify" as "to acquit a defendant and pronounce him just, and Luther consistently uses the word in the sense that something or someone is not guilty: "I know that Thou canst not condemn this Word for it is justified in itself" WA 8, 81, 12f.; W<sup>2</sup> 18, 1120; LW 32, 192. Furthermore, Luther actually regarded it as leading someone astray if one could spiritually console a person who is about to be executed in this way, that he should submit himself to the execution willingly, WA 40 I, 264, 7-14, W<sup>2</sup> 9, 208; LW 26, 153).

Day. If we are not in accord with His will, then we are already judged now and on the Last Day we will decisively be cast out by God.

In the face of what God demands in His law, it is clear that we are not righteous before Him and are therefore lost. Saving justification rather means that in this situation we do not have to be lost - that God nevertheless considers and accepts us as righteous. How is this possible? In what does this righteousness consist, if not in our being and doing, which Luther so strenuously rejects?

If one reads Luther's writings with this question in mind, one will find various answers throughout. They can all, however, be condensed into three main concepts, which in their mutual relationship can be carefully correlated to one another. These three are the righteousness of Christ, faith in Christ and the imputation of God. I would like to unfold these concepts further in their connection with our righteousness before God by beginning with two quotations. The first citation is an early one from Luther's sermon on double righteousness.

It is in this sense that we are to understand the prayer in Psalm 30 (Ps. 31:1): 'In thee, O Lord, do I seek refuge; let me never be put to shame; in thy righteousness deliver me!' It does not say 'in my' but 'in thy righteousness', that is, in the righteousness of Christ my God which becomes ours through faith and by the grace and mercy of God.<sup>27</sup>

The second is from Luther's 1531 Galatians Commentary:

Here it is to be noted that these three things are joined together: faith, Christ, and acceptance or imputation. Faith takes hold of Christ and has Him present, enclosing Him as the ring enclosed the gem. And whoever is found having this faith in the Christ who is grasped in the heart, him God accounts as righteous. This is the means and the merit by which we obtain the forgiveness of sins and righteousness. 'Because you believe in Me,' God says, 'and your faith takes hold of Christ, whom I have freely given to you as your Justifier and Savior, therefore be righteous.'<sup>28</sup>

Both of these references obviously speak about the same matter, namely, how God saves us (note that the concept "saving justification" has its roots in the first of these two quotations). He does it not through our own but through His righteousness, because He considers those to be righteous who hold fast to Christ in faith.

### **1. Our Righteousness is Christ's Righteousness**

It is not necessary to emphasize at this point that Jesus Christ is the base and center of all of the theology of Martin Luther, just as the Scriptures proclaim Him to us and the early church confesses Him. The Reformation wants nothing other than to make Jesus Christ with His work fruitful again for the church and all people. Luther himself refers to this fact when, in the Smalcald Articles, he presents the office and work of Jesus Christ immediately after the chief article of the Trinity. He says that everything which he teaches and lives against the pope, the devil and the world is based on this article,

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<sup>27</sup> WA 2, 146, 20-23; W<sup>2</sup> 10, 1266.

<sup>28</sup> WA 40 I, 233, 16-22; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 181, LW 26, 132.

That Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, "died for our sins and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). And he alone is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world" (John 1:29); and "God has laid upon Him the iniquities of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Likewise, "all have sinned and are justified without merit by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in His blood" (Romans 3:23-25).<sup>29</sup>

All this can only be attained through faith. Luther especially emphasizes at this point the atoning death of Jesus Christ. One must not overlook the fact that this atoning death is embedded in the complete work of the obedience of Jesus Christ to the will of His father. For this obedience, which includes the fulfillment of the Law of God, Luther uses in the first of two quotations above a concept to which he held fast throughout his life - "the alien righteousness of Christ":

The first is alien righteousness, that is the righteousness by which Christ Himself is righteous and justifies through faith.<sup>30</sup>

The explanation "by which the Lord Christ is righteous" shows what he means by "alien" righteousness. This means that everything Christ did accorded with the will of God and was righteous before Him.<sup>31</sup> The alien righteousness is, therefore, also Christ's own righteousness. It is not in us nor is it done by us, but rather, it is outside of us and hidden from us. In a very important 1537 sermon on John 16, Luther says:

It is no work, no thought, in short, nothing whatever in us but is entirely outside of us in Christ.<sup>32</sup>

How then can it be said about this alien righteousness of Christ that it is our righteousness? In the sermon on double righteousness Luther says that it is infused in us. We will examine this matter shortly, but before we do, it should first be shown that this righteousness of Christ is ours insofar as it is worked for us and God has given it to us as our own or as a gift:

You have the most important witnesses that the righteousness of Christ is your righteousness. First there is the Word of God itself which says that Christ has died for you. Then you have Holy Baptism . . . You also have the Sacrament of the Altar. . .<sup>33</sup>

It is God's word and sacraments which give expression to the fact that what Christ has done is ours. Here is the distinction between Law and Gospel, namely, the law has the command to demand righteousness, and the Gospel, on the other hand, the command

That out of grace, it give the righteousness demanded by the Law to those who do not have it (that is, all men).<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Smalcald Articles, II, 1, *Bekennnisschriften* p. 415, Triglotta, 461, Tappert, 292.

<sup>30</sup> WA 2, 145, 9f.

<sup>31</sup> See also the theses for the doctoral disputation of Weller/Medler, 2nd series of theses, 73-80. WA 39 I, 52, 16-32; W<sup>2</sup> 19, 1448f., LW 34, 109ff.

<sup>32</sup> WA 46, 44, 35f.; W<sup>2</sup> 8, 659.

<sup>33</sup> WA 25, 368, 18-24; W<sup>2</sup> 6, 788.

<sup>34</sup> WA 36, 35, 36 - 36, 16; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 806.

Thus the Gospel and sacraments show us that the righteousness of Christ is our righteousness. Therefore they are thus of fundamental importance in that in them we obtain this alien righteousness also in reality.

## **2. Our Righteousness is Faith in Christ**

It now remains to be explained how we can say that this alien righteousness of Christ has become our own. To do that I refer to the definition of infused righteousness. How is it to be understood? It should be said once and for all that one would be on a completely wrong path if one were to understand by the alien infused righteousness of Christ that power of grace in scholastic Roman theology which is infused into a man and which empowers him to do the works of love through which he stands righteous and accepted before God. In an earlier citation Luther explains the concept of infusion as "being justified through faith." And he emphasizes again and again that the alien righteousness of Christ becomes our own through faith. This faith he designates, as also in later writings, as the "truly infused faith."<sup>35</sup> How he more specifically understands that the righteousness of Christ becomes our own, is here explained in two examples.

This righteousness, then, is given to men in baptism and whenever they are truly repentant. Therefore a man can with confidence boast in the Lord Christ and be joyful and say: "what thy Lord Christ lived, acted, did, spoke, and suffered, and finally died are mine in no other way than if I myself had done and undergone the same living, acting, being, speaking, suffering, and dying. It is just as a bridegroom possesses all that is his bride's and she all that is his - all that they have is theirs in common because they are one flesh (Gen. 2:24) as are the Lord Christ and the church or the Christian congregation are one spirit (Eph. 5:29-32).... Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ's righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that is his, indeed, He Himself, becomes ours."<sup>36</sup>

Luther here as he often does uses the picture of the joint property of a bridegroom and his bride. Just as whatever the bridegroom has acquired belongs also to the bride, so also the righteousness of Christ belongs to those who are bound in one spirit with Christ. It is just as good as if he himself had led the life of obedience and propitiation that Christ Himself had led for him. The righteousness of Christ is therefore not infused in such a way that all the works of Jesus in some mysterious fashion enter into us (however one might imagine that); it is rather that it becomes our own possession through our union with Christ in one spirit. And this union with Jesus Christ occurs when the Father draws us to the Son (John 6:44), that is, when He works faith in Him. Such faith then means that Jesus Christ becomes ours in the sense that He enters into us and works in our hearts.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> For example in the doctoral disputation of Weller/Medler, second series of theses, thesis 16, WA 39 I, 45, 29f.; W<sup>2</sup> 19, 1438f.; LW 34, 110.

<sup>36</sup> WA 2, 145, 14-21; 146, 8f.; W<sup>2</sup> 10, 1265.

<sup>37</sup> One place in the sermon on the "Two Kinds of Righteousness" could be misunderstood. W<sup>2</sup>.10, 1266 reads: "For this alien righteousness is not poured in all at once; but rather it begins, grows, and is finally perfect through death." In contrast with this, the text presented in WA 2, 146, 34f. has only: "For it is not completely infused, but it begins, advances, and is perfected in the end through death." The subject ought to be connected with the faith and knowledge of Christ which comes immediately before. The driving out of the Old Adam portrayed here really pertains to the second kind of righteousness which flows out of faith and is exercised according to the measure of



In this next example, which is also taken from the 1531 Galatians Commentary, the Reformer turns his attention against the scholastic teaching which maintains that it is not faith which is actually the essential element for saving righteousness, but rather the love which works. They would say that faith corresponds to love just as a sketch to a finished picture. Just as a picture is not complete and finished without its colors, so also is faith a crude sketch which only through colors, that is, love is dressed and filled out. Thus they maintain that love is the essential element needed for faith and therefore faith alone can never save.

Therefore Christian faith is not an idle quality or an empty husk in the heart, which may exist in a state of mortal sin until love comes along to make it alive. But if it is true faith, it is a sure trust and firm acceptance in the heart. It takes hold of Christ in such a way that Christ is the object of faith, or rather not the object but, so to speak, the One who is present in the faith itself. Thus faith is a sort of knowledge or darkness that nothing can see. Yet the Christ of whom faith takes hold is sitting in this darkness... Therefore our "formal righteousness" is not a love that informs faith; but it is faith itself...<sup>38</sup>

Our intrinsic righteousness, that is, that in which our righteousness before God consists, is therefore faith. This faith is certainly not something that leaves us untouched but rather "it is a sure trust and firm acceptance in the heart. It takes hold of Christ in such a way that Christ is the object of faith..."

That faith must have an object toward which it is directed and which supports the faith has been very deeply impressed upon me by a personal experience, which, by your leave, I venture to interject at this point. As a fourteen year-old boy I often read on the railroad cars in the city in which I grew up the following slogan written in large letters: "We will be victorious because we believe in victory." Already at that time I could not comprehend how our faith could be the guarantee for victory. Should not our faith have been based on something that could guarantee this victory? Indeed we lost the war because the foundation for this faith was not there. Faith in Christ is a different matter. There the all decisive foundation is what He has done. Thus all depends on faith having the right object.

Certainly Luther senses that with the expression "Christ is the object of faith" he has still not said all that he wants to say. Therefore he intensifies the statement as follows: truly, I say that Christ Himself is present in faith. Whenever one speaks about an object of faith then there is always the accompanying idea that it is a question of something apart from the faith itself. Indeed, in Christ, toward which faith is directed, stands a person and an event apart from us, which took place nearly two thousand years ago without us and outside of us. But that is not all, for He who died for us at that time also rose for us at that time and lives today and into all eternity. He is present everywhere where His Word is proclaimed. So our faith in the Christ who

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faith. If one wants to connect, along with the old editions of Luther's works, the gradual infusion with the alien righteousness of Christ, then one has to look at it from two points of view: First, that this alien righteousness removes all sin in one moment, that it justifies fully and completely; secondly, that it is effective in us according to the measure of faith. The alien righteousness is then Christ himself in us, who according to the measure of faith fills us more and more, and is effective in us with ever increasing power. Thereby this efficacy is not a saving efficacy, but rather it is the efficacy which sweeps out sin.

<sup>38</sup> WA 40 1, 228, 31; 229, 19; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 177f.; LW 26, 129f.

at that time died and rose again unifies us with the Christ who today is alive and present also in us. Therefore Christ Himself is present in faith.<sup>39</sup>

To the question as to what extent faith is our righteousness, we can now answer with the following statements: the essence of our righteousness is faith; the essence of faith is Christ and His righteousness. Or, faith is our righteousness inasmuch as it grasps Christ who is our righteousness. Accordingly the expression "faith grasps Christ" means for Luther not only that faith believes what Christ has done for him but also that faith grasps the person of Christ Himself.

Therefore the Christ who is grasped by faith and who lives in the heart is the true Christian righteousness, on account of which God counts as righteous and grants us eternal life.<sup>40</sup>

### **Excursus: Faith as Renewal or Rebirth, Faith as Fulfillment of the Law**

At this point we must add an excursus in order better to understand what Martin Luther taught concerning saving faith and also at the same time to take into account other views of faith from the perspective of justification.

Up to this time we have said that faith is the firm confidence and trust in Christ whereby Christ and His righteousness are grasped, so that Christ and the believer are united with one another. One could also express this fact with a single word: faith is the knowledge of Christ, that is, a living knowledge which relates to itself what Christ has done and who He is. Throughout his life Luther concerned himself with defending and further clarifying this faith, not only against Roman-scholastic theology, but also against the fleshly misunderstandings of the evangelical camp. A classic example of this is contained in the already cited theses on Romans 3:28 of which the most important are

15. Paul preaches this faith, which the Holy Ghost gives and keeps in the hearts of those who heed the voice of the Gospel.
17. Acquired faith or the infused faith of the sophists, says of Christ, "I believe that the Son of God suffered and rose again" and here it stops.
18. But true faith says, "certainly I believe that the Son of God suffered and arose, but He did this all for me, for my sins, of that I am certain."
22. True faith with arms outstretched joyfully embraces the Son of God given for it and says, "this is my beloved and I am His."<sup>41</sup>

We see how Luther here accentuates the fact that faith is worked by God and does not come from our own powers; it perceives and accepts the "for me" of the work and the person of Christ; and it grasps Christ Himself. This same fact is expressed by Luther in a completely different way when he says that faith changes, renews or gives rebirth to the heart and this is

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<sup>39</sup> See also: "Hence the speculation of the sectarians is vain when they imagine that Christ is present in us 'spiritually', that is, speculatively, but is present really in heaven. Christ and faith must be completely joined. We must simply take our place in heaven; and Christ must be, live, and work in us. But he lives and works in us, not speculatively but really, with presence and with power." WA 40 1, 546, 23-28; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 471; LW 26, 357.

<sup>40</sup> WA 40,1, 229, 28-30; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 178, LW 26, 130. That we are not dealing here with an Osiandrian doctrine of justification must become clear from what is said before this. Luther does not mean that the Christ who dwells in us and fills us with his divine purity is our righteousness, but rather the Christ who has carried out the work of salvation outside of us, in whom we hide ourselves like baby chicks under the wings of the hen. Only in this way, then, does he dwell in us.

<sup>41</sup> WA 39, I, 45, 27f., 31f., 33f.; 46, 3f.; W<sup>2</sup> 19, 1438f.; LW 34, 110f.

spoken in the same context as saving justification. How is that meant? In 1520 he explained it in a somewhat formal way in his explanations about infused faith.

When this Word of God, that God justifies the individual, who believes in Him, is proclaimed and the individual's heart is filled with this truth, then his heart will become warm and burn, just as when one lays a cold piece of wood on a glowing piece of iron. In this way faith is not a peaceful quality of the soul but is rather the "imparted power of the Word."<sup>42</sup> Luther describes this more concretely in his interpretation of John 3, especially in a Trinity sermon which Cruziger published in the Sommerpostille in 1544. Luther first points out that the old Adam, his wisdom, reason, and virtues, can never accomplish anything. Therefore man needs a new birth.

In short there must be an entirely different being; that is, that the entire person must be changed so as to obtain an altogether new mind and heart, and new thoughts and feelings.<sup>43</sup>

Of what nature this new reason and heart is, the interpretation of the words of our Lord - "that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," - makes clear:

He calls "Spirit" that which God works in us above the ability of human nature, namely, such spiritual knowledge, light and understanding as he reveals to us, to the end that one may know God, turn to Him, lay hold of his grace and cling to him. In order that man may receive these revelations, his heart must first be renewed and enlightened by the Holy Spirit that he may learn to know God's will toward him and may understand the way to obtain grace and everlasting life.<sup>44</sup>

This transformation, renewal or rebirth consists, therefore, on this, that the heart of man does what it previously did not do or could not do, namely, know and grasp God in Christ in His grace and forgiveness. That is nothing other than what Luther has described as faith. Faith in Christ is something new worked by God in the hearts of men; it is a transformation and a new mind and spirit within us. Out of such a new mind and spirit, out of such a new attitude, behavior or quality of the heart - whatever one wants to call it - prayer, love and good works flow; this is taken for granted and corresponds to the nature of the matter. Here we will only take note of it and later we will speak about it again.

The origin of saving faith and, the rebirth or transformation of the heart are thus identical with one another.

When you are asked: How does the new birth take place, in which the Spirit through the water and the Word makes a person a child of God? you must answer: In the way that Christ has here stated - it takes place when over and against the terror on account of your sin, you grasp this comfort, the belief that Christ, the Son of God is come from heaven for your sake and has been raised upon the cross for you, in order that you should not perish but have eternal life. This faith is the chest, or shrine, which holds the treasure of the forgiveness of sins and the heritage of eternal life, and man is saved by it; as Christ says, "Thy faith hath made thee whole" etc.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> WA 6, 88ff.; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 1430f.

<sup>43</sup> WA 21, 530, 25; W<sup>2</sup> 11, 1168; Lenker, Vol. 12, 428.

<sup>44</sup> WA 21, 533, 9-15; W<sup>2</sup> 11, 1171f.; Lenker, Vol. 12, 431.

<sup>45</sup> WA 21, 551, 22-31; W<sup>2</sup> 11, 1193f.; Lenker, Vol. 12, 454.

Faith is something completely new in the heart and with faith, the heart is changed according to the will of God. This fact leads to Luther's statements to which we must soon refer. The fact of the matter is that the Reformer can look at faith as the fulfillment of the first commandment. Faith does nothing other than what God actually desires from us in the first commandment, namely, that we trust Him, consider Him to be true, just and merciful, in short, give Him His honor and let Him truly be God. Thus, faith is the highest service and obedience to God; it is true and essential righteousness, even if it is only a beginning righteousness, which is often truly weak, indeed, which can only be a small spark of faith.<sup>46</sup>

The question is now whether this fact, that faith is the true fulfillment of the Law, has some kind of significance for saving justification for Luther. Some statements in the Galatians Commentary were so understood: "Hence faith begins righteousness, but imputation perfects it [until the day of Christ]."<sup>47</sup> However, the meaning here is not that Christian righteousness consists to a small degree in faith and to a larger degree in imputation. In justification, Luther never, to the best of my knowledge, referred to his faith over against God as obedience and as fulfillment of the law. Especially there in his Galatians Commentary, where in opposition to the Roman theologians he holds fast to faith and not love as the essential part of righteousness he emphasizes that faith is only the means to grasp Christ:

Therefore we too, acknowledge a quality and a formal righteousness in the heart, but we do not mean love, as the Sophists do, but faith, because the heart must behold in that way that and grasp nothing but Christ<sup>48</sup>

Thus it remains that righteousness "is [not] given to faith as a work of ours; it is given because of God's thought, which faith lays hold of."<sup>49</sup>

### **3. Our Righteousness Is the Imputation of God**

Two answers have thus far been given to the question: what is that righteousness according to which we as lost sinners are nevertheless considered righteous before God and are therefore saved. The first answer is that this righteousness was the righteousness of Christ; the other was that it is faith, which grasps this righteousness of Christ, in fact, Christ Himself. Now we will unfold the third answer in which it is the case that God acknowledges this fact as righteousness, that the sinner believes in Christ and conceals himself in the righteousness of Christ. This third answer is also fundamental to our salvation and no less important even if we here can dedicate relatively little space to it.

If God would not acknowledge the righteousness of Christ and faith which grasps it as our righteousness, then we would have to be lost, our faith not withstanding.

Time and time again Luther stresses, as the decisive perception of the Reformation, that God's saving righteousness does not consist in the punishment of the evil works of men and the reward of the good, but rather "in the mercy and grace itself of which is given to us in Christ."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> WA 40 I, 360, 17ff.; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 301f.; LW 26, 228f. In the reckoning of faith as righteousness it is also clearly proven that Luther, in the much discussed passage in his work *Against Latomus* (WA 8, 105-108; W<sup>2</sup> 18, 1162-1166; LW 32, 226-230), can call the gift in us, namely faith, righteousness, and from it he distinguishes grace outside of us, namely the favor or forgiveness of God.

<sup>47</sup> WA 40 I, 364, 27f.; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 305, LW 26, 230.

<sup>48</sup> WA 40 I, 232, 23-26; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 181, LW 26, 132.

<sup>49</sup> WA 42, 564, 16-18, LW 3, 22.

<sup>50</sup> WA 5, 144, 16; W<sup>2</sup> 4, 422 sec. 105.

It is "the righteousness with which He clothes the person by justifying him, namely, the justifying mercy or grace itself through which we are considered righteous by God."<sup>51</sup> "Everyone who is found to have laid hold of Christ with this confidence in his heart, God reckons to be righteous. This is the way and the merit whereby we come to forgiveness of sins and to righteousness."<sup>52</sup> Thus saving righteousness consists in the fact that God declares as righteous that person who in faith is concealed in Christ. "To justify" is therefore as good as to say "to declare righteous," and in this sense when it concerns itself with saving justification, it can be expressed as "to become righteous" (*iustum fieri*) or "to make righteous" (*iustificare*) or "to sanctify or cleanse."<sup>53</sup> In his rich explanation of the 51st Psalm Luther explains justification to his students as pure imputation in the following manner: The Christian is righteous and holy through a holiness which lies outside of him and is alien to him (*extrinseca sanctitas*), namely, through the mercy and grace of God which here is not considered as a quality or condition of the heart (*qualitas, habitudo*), but rather as favor and pardoning forbearance of God.

Therefore the Christian is not formally righteous, he is not righteous according to substance or quality - I use these words for instruction's sake. He is righteous according to his relation to something, namely, only in respect to divine grace and the free forgiveness of sins ....<sup>54</sup>

In view of this decisive and clear statement concerning saving justification as a mere promise and favor of God we must remind ourselves of what was stated in the excursus. Here Luther expressly rejects the idea that the Christian is righteous in an essential or qualitative sense. In the excursus, however, we established that he teaches faith - not love - as the essential condition and quality in the heart and he can speak about it as beginning righteousness in the sense of fulfilling the law. Is that not a contradiction? I do not believe so because time and time again it is clear that faith saves and justifies not as our own righteousness before God, but rather as a means through which the righteousness of Christ is grasped. Faith is a quality of the heart; it is something that is righteous, however as such it does not save us. This is a great consolation for us and teaches us not to build on faith but rather on Christ (and thus to grasp Him through faith).

Finally, we should take note of the expression frequently used by the reformers in the previous citations and often falsely interpreted. Luther used the expressions "forgiveness of sin" and "righteousness" interchangeably and next to one another. Therefore, one cannot understand under righteousness the inner transformation of the sinner as the fulfillment of the law; rather both expressions mean - one and the same thing, although from different perspectives. Forgiveness of sins means that the transgression and personal corruption of a person will not be

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<sup>51</sup> WA 5, 144, 4f.; W<sup>2</sup> 422 sec. 104.

<sup>52</sup> See Note II, 12.

<sup>53</sup> For example, WA 40 II, 350, 24f.; W<sup>2</sup> 5, 505; LW 12, 326: "It is clear-how we become righteous, namely, by the mere imputation of righteousness ...." WA 39 I, 99, 16f.; LW 34, 168: "To purify the heart is to impute purification to the heart." See also note 39 below.

<sup>54</sup> "*Ergo Christianus non est formaliter iustus, non est iustus secundum substantiam aut qualitatem (docendi causa hisce vocabulis utor), sed est iustus secundum praedicamentum ad aliquid nempe respectu divinae gratiae tantum et remissionis peccatorum gratuita...*" WA 40 II, 353, 36-354, 17. W<sup>2</sup> 5, 508f.; LW 12, 329. For the "two parts of justification," see WA 40 II, 357, 35; W<sup>2</sup> 5, 512; LW 12, 331; see the following lecture.

reckoned; righteousness means that God considers us as one who lives according to His will and standard.<sup>55</sup>

### **When is the Sinner Saved?**

It now remains only to draw a conclusion from everything that has been said. I will clothe this conclusion with the question: When is the sinner saved? Luther leaves no room for doubt when he answers this question. Faith is the chest and container which holds forgiveness and inheritance of eternal life. Saving righteousness becomes ours through faith. For the sake of Christ, it is grasped in faith and God gives us eternal life as a gift. "If I am instructed in the word of God and through faith grasp Christ and with total confidence of the heart (what, nevertheless, without will cannot happen) believe in Him, then I am righteous through this knowledge."<sup>56</sup> All these words show that only faith grasps salvation, blessedness and eternal life and that everything that happens in addition to it will be of no help and does not belong to justification. In the moment in which you believe, you are saved. I will conclude with the words Luther used to comfort a person who was doubting and terrified of God,

Then there comes, at the appropriate time, the saving Word of the Gospel, which says: "Take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven" (Matthew 9:2). Believe in Jesus Christ, who was crucified for your sins, do not consider them in yourself but remember that they have been transferred to Christ, 'with whose stripes you are healed' (Isaiah 53:5). This is the beginning of salvation. By this means we are delivered from sin and justified, and eternal life is granted to us.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> See WA 39 I, 83, 35-38; W<sup>2</sup> 19, 1452; LW 34, 153: "To be justified includes that idea, namely that we are considered righteous on account of Christ. Nor is any sin, either past or a remainder that is left in the flesh, imputed to us, but as if it were nothing, removed in the meantime by remission."

<sup>56</sup> WA 40 II, 27, 14-16; W<sup>2</sup> 5, 626.

<sup>41</sup>.WA 40 I, 232, 16-22; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 180; LW 26, 131f.

## Lecture III

### III. The Consequences

In the preceding lectures, we worked through the question of what, according to Luther, saves man, who stands before God as a sinner and can bring forth nothing good. It is the alien righteousness of Christ, which we grasp in faith and which is, therefore, reckoned to us by God as our own righteousness.

The doctrine of justification is this, that we are pronounced righteous and are saved solely by faith in Christ, and without works.<sup>58</sup>

Anything else which God also works in us, particularly that in our words and deeds we begin to become righteous, does not mean that we can say: I am holy. Thus the difference between saving righteousness on the one hand and a righteousness which fulfills the law in us on the other, is fundamental for our salvation and the certainty of salvation.

In this lecture we must first occupy ourselves with a number of various consequences and aspects which Luther's interpretation of saving righteousness serve to clarify. And then we will draw conclusions from it.

#### Justification as Rebirth or New Creation

We have seen that Luther considered three parts to be essential to Christian righteousness and with it: a saving justification: Christ, faith and the imputation of God. What does it mean in this context that Luther can consistently call justification "rebirth" or "regeneration"? We must look at this term very carefully, because since that time the meaning of rebirth has been understood in many different ways. Pietism with its doctrine of the *ordo salutis* [the order of salvation] caused much confusion. Edmund Schlink, too, about whom I spoke in the first lecture, understands rebirth as a third thing which is different from justification and good works. He says, "Like justification, so also regeneration and new obedience are gifts of God's grace."<sup>59</sup> By justification, he means that the sinner has grasped God's forgiveness by faith;<sup>60</sup> moreover, there is a rebirth or renewal, by which Schlink understands that man is really changed and made righteous. Accordingly, good works flow from both of them. When Schlink says that justification is also rebirth, then for him saving justification means first that the sinner believes in the forgiveness of sins, and, second, that he is reborn, i.e., he has become a new person. Correspondingly, he distinguishes within saving Justification the two concepts: "declaring righteous" and "making -righteous."

When Luther on the other hand speaks of rebirth within the context of justification, he does not understand it as something different from the fact that Christ's righteousness is faith. But he does speak of rebirth instead of justification. Thus he said in the introduction to a sermon on John 3:3ff., that in this Gospel "the chief part of the doctrine of Christianity" is set forth for us, namely, "how one becomes pious and righteous before God." But the sermon then deals with rebirth. Then at the conclusion of the sermon, Luther uses the terms "new birth" and "the

<sup>58</sup> WA 40 I, 355, 24f.; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 296; LW 26, 223.

<sup>59</sup> Schlinck, op. cit., p. 113 (Ch. IV, Thesis 4).

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, 112f.

righteousness of man before God" interchangeably and describes the new birth with the same three parts, which we know from saving justification.

Thus, Christ has delivered the entire discourse concerning the new birth, or the righteousness of man in the sight of God, going through all the parts which must needs be taught in this connection, namely, whence and by what means it is effected and how it is obtained. He has instructed us concerning the Word, baptism and the Spirit who works through these means; concerning the merit and sacrifice of Christ, for whose sake the grace of God and eternal life are given us; and concerning faith, by which we appropriate these blessings.<sup>61</sup>

Here rebirth is nothing else than a designation that man is justified when justifying faith arises. In a similar way, Luther refers strictly to faith and nothing else in the first of a series of theses on Romans 3:28.

65. Justification is in reality a kind of rebirth in newness, as John says: who believe in his name and were born of God.
66. Therefore, Paul calls baptism the "washing of regeneration and renewal" and Christ himself says, "Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
67. For that reason, it is impossible to be justified by good works since it is impossible for us to be born of our works, but rather, the works are born of us, so to speak.
68. By the same Spirit we are called righteous, a new creature of God and the first fruits of God's creatures, who according to his will brought us forth by his Word.<sup>62</sup>

That justification is rebirth is proved here by the fact that those who believe in the name of God and of Christ are born of God. That Paul and Christ speak of baptism as a rebirth is based on the fact that baptism saves; that through baptism one enters the Kingdom of God. That, however, is nothing other than to be justified. One could summarize Luther's thoughts regarding John 3 and other passages where rebirth is mentioned, by saying: we become righteous before God and we are saved through justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith. Christ says, "No one will be saved unless he is reborn." Hence justification by -grace through faith alone is rebirth.

Luther designates justification as rebirth because the origin of justifying faith is rebirth. This is definitively expressed by a whole series of texts which characterize justifying faith as rebirth. In the sermons on John's Gospel, Luther unfolds what the Holy Spirit means by the phrase "new birth."

Whoever believes in Christ, whoever believes that Christ was born, that He died for us, was buried for us, and was raised from the dead - is born anew or reborn. This rebirth makes a person a new man. Now you are animated by the thought which no papist or Turk has, namely, that Christ died for you, that He was raised from the dead and now sits at the right hand of God. And if you remain constant in this faith, then the Holy Spirit is there to baptize you, to strengthen and increase your faith, and to implant a new understanding in your heart. He also awakens in you holy and new thoughts and

<sup>61</sup> WA 21, 551,15-21; W<sup>2</sup> 11, 1193; Lenker 12, 343.

<sup>62</sup> WA 39 I, 48, 14-23; W<sup>2</sup> 19, 1442f.; LW 34, 112.



impulses, so that you begin to love God, refrain from all ungodly conduct, gladly do God's will, love your neighbor, and shun anger, hatred and envy .... it is immaterial how you dress, and it also does not matter whether you are male or female. For none of this will grant you the new birth. No, this comes only when I believe that Christ died for me.<sup>63</sup>

In this quotation, Luther-not-only identifies faith with rebirth, but he also lets it be known to what extent faith is a rebirth as a renewal. The "newness" consists in the thoughts the individual has<sup>64</sup> which no Papist or Turk has, namely, that Christ died and rose. What the Holy Spirit does beyond this if the individual remains in faith is distinguished from this fundamental newness: he strengthens faith, gives new understanding to the heart, awakens new and holy thoughts and feelings, namely love toward God and the neighbor and the renunciation of evil. That which the Spirit works through faith, is also something new, but faith itself is the thing which is fundamentally new. In another place Luther can characterize it as "spiritual knowledge, light and understanding, through which we know God, turn to Him and lay hold of His grace."<sup>65</sup> Or, he characterizes the renewal in baptism, which reverses the entire nature of man and transforms it into another nature, with the words, "This, mark you, is the true knowledge of the pure grace of God."<sup>66</sup> Finally, he identifies faith itself with this renewal:

Concerning this birth, Christ also declares (Jn 3,3): "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Here we are taught that works will not answer; the individual must himself die and obtain a different nature. This takes place in baptism when he believes, for faith is this renewing.<sup>67</sup>

Faith is, therefore, something new insofar as man knows Christ and trusts him, which the old man is not able to do. Faith to this extent is really the death of the old man-this man who flees from God, seeing in him only a judge who punishes evil. Faith is the new creature which has been wrought by God, through the word, by the power of his spirit. Naturally, Luther can speak of the new creation of the new creature and of more similar terms also in the wider sense, in which he includes the insights and ways of conduct as well as -feelings, which are wrong faith. He can even speak of the beginning of the new creature, in the sense that only the fruit of faith is meant.<sup>68</sup> But, if renewal and rebirth are mentioned in connection with justification, then it is faith which grasps Christ and knows the gracious God.

<sup>63</sup> WA 47, 14, 8-18 and 24-27; W<sup>2</sup> 7, 1862; LW 22, 286. See also: "Whosoever believes the Gospel, is conceived and born of God" WA 10 I, 114,13f.; W<sup>2</sup> 12, 141; Lenker 7,156.

<sup>64</sup> That Luther, when he speaks here of "thoughts" does not mean the thought processes, rather a rooted knowledge in the deepness of the heart, must not be completely laid out. An example can be found in Roerer's Elaboration on Luther's sermons from 1538, W<sup>2</sup> 9, 1120 (not in WA): "He who believes such a sermon, namely that Christ had died and was raised for his sake, for this man Christ's resurrection has become a power; by this way he has been reborn, that is, according to God's image he has been made anew; he receives the Holy Spirit, knows God's gracious will, has a heart, sense, courage, will and thoughts which no works-righteous person or hypocrite has, namely, that he becomes righteous and blessed not through the work of the law, much less through his own righteousness, rather, through Christ's misfortunes and resurrection."

<sup>65</sup> See Lecture II, note 28.

<sup>66</sup> WA 10 I, 1,112,10; W<sup>2</sup> 12, 140; Lenker 7, 155.

<sup>67</sup> WA 10 I 1, 113, 1-5; W<sup>2</sup> 12, 140, Lenker 7, 155.

<sup>68</sup> For example: "The start of a new creature accompanies this faith and the battle against the sin of the flesh, which this same faith in Christ both pardons and conquers" WA 39 I, 83, 39f.; W<sup>2</sup> 19, 1453; LW 34, 153.

## The Pure Heart

We have now arrived at a point where it is possible for us to turn to a question upon whose answer depends much pertaining to the doctrine of justification today. The question to which I refer is: What is actually meant when Luther says again and again that first a person must be righteous, holy, pious and pure before he can do righteous, holy, pious, and pure works before God? Or, as he also often says, that the tree must be good before good fruit can come from it.<sup>69</sup> Must not a person actually be righteous and pure in his essence before he can do such works? Faith would then be a means through which the pious and righteous person is produced, in consequence of which piety and righteousness this person is declared righteous by God. Many of today's Lutherans think that way, as also does Edmund Schlink who explicitly appeals for this purpose to Luther's well known words in the Smalcald Articles:

That by faith (as St. Peter says) we get a new and clean heart and that God will and does account us altogether righteous and holy for the sake of Christ.<sup>70</sup>

Here, in Schlink's opinion, Luther speaks not only of an imputed purity of the heart, but also of a real purity. "If the sinner is declared righteous by God, he is not only considered righteous, but he is righteous."<sup>71</sup> One could put it directly into a formula in which to declare righteous and to make righteous are to be understood differently: first God makes one righteous and then He declares him righteous. Then, the pious and pure heart would actually be a constituent part of saving justification. Is that really Luther's intention?

For an answer, we turn first to a Luther sermon on 1 Timothy 1:5-7, in which he deals with the purity of the heart. There he understands a pure or pious heart (both terms being interchangeable for Luther) as a heart which serves God completely without self-interest and only for God's sake. The only problem is that man is not able to show this purity and piety before the judgement seat of God.

What does it mean to be good? If you say it means to have a good conscience and a pure heart and to do all that God has commanded, this is right. But go ahead and do it or show me one man who can say he has... But the law demands, as has been sufficiently said, a heart which has a good conscience before God. Where are you going to get it? ....Certainly not by preaching the judgment seat, but rather by having pure, unfeigned faith, which takes hold of Christ and in him finds and obtains all the law requires. Then everything is pure and of good conscience and is counted good and just before God, for though much is lacking in me, he stands there for me and has so much goodness that he can make up for my and all men's deficiencies.<sup>72</sup>

Accordingly, the pure heart, which we have through faith, is a heart which has a good conscience not because it had fulfilled the law itself, but, because it has Christ, who has fulfilled

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<sup>69</sup> "So faith first makes the person, who afterwards performs works .... For Christians do not become righteous by doing righteous works; but once they have been justified by faith in Christ, they do righteous works" (WA 40 I, 402,16f. and 24f.; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 338; LW 26, 255f. "Similarly works do not render us pure and godly or save us; we are first made clean and godly, and receive salvation; then we freely perform good works to the honor of God and the benefit of our neighbor" WA 10 I 112, 7-9; W<sup>2</sup> 12, 140; Lenker 7, 155.

<sup>70</sup> BSLK p. 460; III, 13, Tappert p. 315, Triglotta p. 499.

<sup>71</sup> See Lecture I, note 2.

<sup>72</sup> WA 36, 373, 5-16; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 910f.; LW 51, 285.

the law. A pure heart is a heart, which is no longer frightened and oppressed by the law and its demands because it has everything in Christ. A pure heart is a heart which is safe in Christ from God's wrath and, therefore does not have to serve itself any longer, but is free to love and serve God and the neighbor. It is clear that such a heart is something other than it was before, because the old heart does not know itself to be safe in Christ. However, this new heart does not consist in the person's being righteous (a concept, by the way, difficult to grasp) but rather in the confidence of faith.

A clearly classical remark on this, as to how Luther understands the purifying of the heart in connection with saving justification, can be found in one of the University disputations held in Wittenberg in 1536. There Luther answers an objection, which refers to the words of Peter in Acts 15, a passage he himself used in the Smalcald Articles. The objection is:

To justify does not mean to accept or to pronounce righteous, but it means to infuse new qualities, for Peter says, "cleansing their hearts by faith" [Acts 15:9]. To cleanse a heart is nothing else than to infuse new qualities.

To which the Reformer answered:

The word for purifying, moreover, in Acts is the word for imputing. To purify the heart is to impute purification to the heart. God cleanses the Gentiles, that is, he considers them cleansed, because they have faith, although they are really sinners. He first purifies by imputation, then he gives the Holy Spirit, through whom he purifies in substance. Faith cleanses through the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit cleanses through the effect. This is divine cleansing and purification which is let down from heaven, by faith and the Holy Spirit.<sup>73</sup>

Here Luther distinguishes, therefore, between purifying through faith, which consists in the imputation of purity, and the purifying through the Holy Spirit, which is actually in us. With that, there can be no doubt that only the first belongs to saving purity. How imputed and effective purity relate to each other, of this we will speak shortly. Let us first, however, establish this: the statement that "God purifies the heart through faith" used in the context of justification means that God lets us know that before Him we are considered pure, righteous or pious for Christ's sake, without in reality being such. He gives us a good conscience before Him. That the sinner through faith becomes pious, righteous, pure or new does not mean that faith is a kind of tool which produces a person who is righteous; who is in the final analysis independent from Him; rather it means that the sinner knows God's forgiveness, claims the righteousness of Christ, has a good conscience before God on account of Christ, and is safe in Christ. That this faith itself is a transformation out of which a completely different behavior flows, is, after all, as the saying goes, self-evident. Yet this is not what is being discussed here, but will be in the next section.

### **Justifying Faith and Its Fruits**

Up to this point we have said that faith is that which lays hold of the righteousness of Christ; that it is confidence and trust in God and Christ; that it is a new understanding, a new inner attitude toward God; that it means a pure conscience; that it is thus a rebirth and a new creature. We have also said that faith is wrought by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, that it

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<sup>73</sup> WA 39 I, 98, 16-19 and 99, 15-29; LW 34 167f.

unites us together with Christ and the Holy Spirit so that Christ is in us, and that faith is God's word and power in us. If that is true, then it should give us no difficulty to grasp what Luther says about the power and efficacy of this faith, namely, that Christ Himself works this faith in us.

Now that the light of the Gospel has risen, [the heart] knows that it acquires righteousness solely by faith in Christ. Therefore it now casts off its self-chosen works and performs instead the works of its calling and the works of love, which God has commanded. It praises God and proclaims Him, and it glories and exults solely in its trust in mercy through Christ. If it has to bear some sort of evil or danger, it accepts this willingly and joyfully, although the flesh goes on grumbling. This is what Paul calls 'a new creation.'<sup>74</sup>

For the man who through faith is sure in his heart that he has a gracious God, who is not angry with him, though he deserves wrath, that man goes out and does everything joyfully. Moreover, he can live this way before men also, loving and doing good to all, even though they are not worthy of love.<sup>75</sup>

We know indeed that faith is never alone but brings with it love and other manifold gifts<sup>76</sup>

The preceding texts make it clear that Luther sees an indissoluble connection between faith and good works and makes clear also how he views the connection. When a heart has really recognized that it is completely, undeservedly saved and is in grace before God, then with it a transformation in itself has taken place not only in the entire attitude towards God, but also toward man, creation and everything that happens in the world. Surely this change does not take place in all areas at once; surely there is along with the change the murmurings of the flesh; but that this process has been begun cannot be otherwise where the knowledge of forgiveness in Christ is really present. One should not misunderstand that here a knowledge takes effect and is changed into action, for it certainly happens within a purely secular realm, that a fundamentally different understanding can lead to different behavior. Luther understands its meaning thus: God himself who has wrought the new understanding, a different behavior and corresponding deeds in us and through us.

It appears to me to be useful to delve more deeply into the matter of the inseparable connection and yet infinitely wide difference between faith and the fruits of faith. Luther probably expresses himself most strongly concerning the unity of faith and works when he compares both of them with the divine and human natures in Christ.

Further one cannot allow a separation of the righteousness of faith and good works, as if they like the sophists, were two different righteousnesses. Rather the righteousness of faith and good works are simply one like God and man are one person, and body and soul are one man. For if you separate them, faith disappears and works remain. That is a twofold godless hypocrisy. Because if they are works, then they are and derive from faith; and if it is faith, then it itself brings forth and works good works.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> WA 40 II, 179,17-23; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 766; LW 27, 140f.

<sup>75</sup> WA 36, 371, 24-28; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 908f.; LW 51, 283.

<sup>76</sup> WA 42, 566, 35f.; W<sup>2</sup> 1, 948; LW 3, 25.

<sup>77</sup> WA 30 II, 659, 4-9.

Here the basic idea is that faith cannot exist only for its own sake; if it were to do so, it could not be true justifying faith. On the other hand, works cannot exist for their own sake, independently from faith, because works only for their own sake are only works of the flesh and are, therefore, not good works.

The unity of faith and its manifestations which Luther here emphasizes is not meant to mislead us into including the manifestations of faith with the justification of the sinner. How strongly he distinguishes them is to be seen particularly where he speaks of the incarnation of faith into good works.

Therefore faith always justifies and makes alive; and yet it does not remain alone, that is, idle. Not that it does not remain alone on its own level and in its own function, for it always justifies alone. But it is incarnate and becomes man; that is, it neither is nor remains idle or without love .... Faith and works are in agreement concretely or compositely, and yet each has and preserves its own nature and proper function.<sup>78</sup>

One cannot separate faith and works, and yet they stand on entirely different levels and have entirely different tasks. Faith takes hold of Christ and saves: works serve God and the neighbor and have nothing to do with salvation. Again and again Luther points to the words of Christ: "When ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you say, We are unprofitable servants" (Luke 17:10). Thus we do good works, not to become holy, but rather because we have become holy. If one were to clarify what Luther says here with an illustration one could speak of the two arms of faith. The one grasps Christ and with Him complete, full righteousness and holiness; the other does good, though not completely and often only little. But the doing-arm comes from the grasping-arm and also receives all of its power from the latter, i.e., from Christ.

If faith and works are so connected and yet so widely differentiated, then one can understand that Luther could use the concepts righteousness, to make or become righteous, to make holy, to purify, to become or be pious, in a narrower or a wider sense. In the narrower sense, righteousness means, as Luther knows how to put it, the principal righteousness of a Christian, through which we are accounted righteous before God through faith, and by which alone we are saved. In the wider sense righteousness means:

To mean believing in Jesus Christ and loving God and our neighbor. That is, it should be taken as standing for the righteousness both of faith and of works.<sup>79</sup>

The last sense is the meaning of Scripture, when it speaks of good works and when it exhorts to do good works or even makes eternal life dependent on good works. Thereby it always concerns a doing, which flows out of faith that alone has saved us, i.e., it concerns a theological and not a moralistic doing.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> 21. WA 40 I, 427, 11-14 and 22-24; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 363; LW 26, 272f.

<sup>79</sup> 22. WA 40 II, 534, 18f.; W<sup>2</sup> 5, 400; LW 12, 244.

<sup>80</sup> 23. See WA 40 I, 411, 24-417, 21; W<sup>2</sup> 346-352; LW 26, 266: "Therefore let us permit the Holy Spirit to speak, as He does in the Scriptures, either about abstract, bare, and simple faith or about concrete, composite, and incarnate faith. Everything that is attributed to works belongs to faith. For works must not be looked at in a moral sense; they must be looked at in a theological and faithful sense."

Many other formulations of Luther can also be explained on the basis of this connection between saving faith which alone saves and the works which flow out of faith. I remind you of the sermon concerning the double righteousness of the Christian, the first, "alien righteousness," which becomes our own through faith, and then the second, "individual righteousness," which flows out of the first and brings it to completion.<sup>81</sup> Or I think in that connection of the discussion concerning the two parts of righteousness, of which Luther speaks in the interpretation of the 51st Psalm. The first consists only in imputation and belongs to the predicate category of relations; the other consists in the sweeping out of sin by the Holy Spirit.<sup>82</sup> But only the first part saves before God; the other belongs to the life of the one who already is saved.

Before I come to the end of this part, I would like to draw your attention to three important items:

- 1) If works come out of faith, from the acknowledgment of God who forgives my sin and saves me from wrath, then they are not forced, but free. Yet they are not discretionary but they grow out of the inner urgency that God has won my heart for Himself. They must exist, like a tree must bear fruit, not because it is forced to do so, but because it is its nature to bear fruit.
  
- 2) There can be no doubt that for Luther, good works, which the Christian does out of faith, fulfill the law of God, even if only in a weak and an initial way. A couple of references should be sufficient to show this. Faith itself is the fulfillment of the law.<sup>83</sup> Through faith, love of the law is poured into our hearts.<sup>84</sup> We do not become free as such because the law is abolished and changed,<sup>85</sup> but because we are changed and instead of enemies of the law we become its friends.<sup>86</sup> Yes, we teach faith, in order that the Law of God can be fulfilled.<sup>87</sup> Luther cannot at all imagine a new man who does not fulfill the Law. That which was sin according to the Law, cannot suddenly be good and righteous through the Gospel. The Gospel forgives and renews, but it does not abolish the will of God. From that point the entire argument about the so-called third use of the Law, namely whether it serves as a teacher of the new man, is therefore decided by a look at Luther. If the new man loves the Law of God and gladly does it, then he will again and again gladly hear and look to it, even when what the Law says is also rooted in our own hearts by the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>81</sup> WA 2, 146, 36-147, 23; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 1266-1268; LW 31, 207-299.

<sup>82</sup> WA 40 II, 357,35-359,33;. W<sup>2</sup> 5, 512; LW 12, 331f. See also WA 40 II, 353,28; W<sup>2</sup> 508; LW 12, 328f., where justification is clearly used in a wider sense.

<sup>83</sup> See Lecture II, note 30.

<sup>84</sup> "...Through faith a love for the Law is infused ....The spirit of faith; however, keeps the Law with love for the Law; that is, he fulfills the Law in the best way" WA 2, 498, 25-28; W<sup>2</sup> 8, 1449; LW 27, 233.

<sup>85</sup> . Relates only to the Decalog as presented in the New Testament.

<sup>86</sup> "We are not free from the Law in a human way (as I have said above,) by which the Law is destroyed and changed, but in a divine and theological way by which we are changed and from enemies of the Law made friends of the Law" WA 2, 574, 34-36; W<sup>2</sup> 8, 1584f.; LW 27, 347.

<sup>87</sup> "Do we then make the Law of none effect if we teach man is justified through faith, and not through works. That is far from us; nay, we establish the Law.' That is, for this very reason we teach faith, by which the Law is fulfilled." Luther's Church Postil, WA 45, . 147,30-33; W<sup>2</sup> 11, 1702; Lenker 14 (Gospels V) p. 186. See also: "Therefore, righteousness of faith is indeed given without all works, but nevertheless they are given to the good works, and for the sake of these works there is something active and alive and cannot be useless" WA 1, 119, 34-36; W<sup>2</sup> 10, 1280.

- 3) If there is an indissoluble connection between faith and good works, then we can infer faith from works. In fact, Luther uses this inference repeatedly in order to distinguish true justifying faith from the empty, idle faith of the scholastics and to guard against the hypocrites.<sup>88</sup> Yet it would be entirely contrary to Luther's idea if one were to rely on works that flow from faith as the basis for the assurance of salvation to escape the danger of hypocritical faith. There is only assurance in this—that we take refuge under the wings of Christ.<sup>89</sup>

### **Justification and the Gift of the Holy Spirit**

Luther, as well as Melancthon, teaches that the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to those who are righteous through faith. Consequently, they distinguish between justification through faith and the giving of the Holy Spirit which follows justification. What is meant by this? Some understand this to say that the Holy Spirit is not present at the time of justification, but that he first comes to man through the gift of the Holy Spirit. If this were so, justification would not be the decisive spiritual event, but the gift of the Spirit would be. One would then certainly be in complete contradiction with what Luther said about justifying faith as a new creation and rebirth as a union between the Christian and Christ and the Spirit. Luther's idea is something different. He proceeds from the gift of the Holy Spirit as it is promised to believers in the book of Acts and referred to in Galatians. There the Holy Spirit is sent to the believers in two ways: one with visible signs, which were, however, no longer necessary after the church had been gathered; and the second without visible form, by which of God renews us through the spoken word, and brings forth spiritual impulses within us.

The second sending is that by which the Holy Spirit through the Word, is sent into the hearts of believers, as is said here: 'God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.' This happens without a visible form, namely, when through the spoken Word we receive fire and light, by which we are made new and different, and by which a new judgment, new sensations, and new drives arise in us. This change and new judgment are not the work of human reason or power; they are the gift and accomplishment of the Holy Spirit, who comes with the preached Word, purifies our hearts by faith, and produces spiritual motivation in us.<sup>90</sup>

God does not leave those who have been justified through faith and thus born anew alone; rather, he abundantly gives and equips them with the gift of the Holy Spirit for their Christian life. Luther himself uses for this the comparison of a man who, sentenced to death, has

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<sup>88</sup> "Accordingly, if good works do not follow, it is certain that this faith in Christ does not dwell in our heart, but that dead faith, which is plainly an acquired faith" WA 39 I, 46, 20f.; W<sup>2</sup> 19, 1440; LW 34, 111. "Works are necessary to salvation, but they do not cause salvation, because faith alone gives life. On account of the hypocrites we must say that good works are necessary to salvation. It is necessary to work" WA 39 I, 96, 5-9, LW 34, 165.

<sup>89</sup> "We must, then, shelter ourselves under his wings (Mt 23:37) and not fly afar in the security of our own faith, else we will soon be devoured by the hawk. Our salvation must exist, not in our righteousness, but, as I have often said, in Christ's righteousness, which is an outspread wing, or a tabernacle, to shelter us. Our faith and all we may have received from God is insufficient to salvation, wholly inadequate, unless faith rests beneath the wings of Christ and firmly trusts that not we but he can render, and has rendered, full satisfaction to the justice of God for us; and that grace and salvation are not conferred upon us because of our faith, but because of the will of Christ. The pure grace of God, promised, procured and bestowed upon us in Christ and through Christ, must be perfectly recognized" WA 10 I, 124, 9-20; W<sup>2</sup> 12, 148; Lenker 7, 163f.

<sup>90</sup> WA 40 I, 572, 16-23; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 493; LW 26, 375.

been pardoned. This man must now be given what is necessary for his future life. So God equips us richly with the gift of the Holy Spirit for our spiritual life here on earth.<sup>91</sup> Therefore the gift of the Spirit is usually seen in these contexts under the aspects of love,<sup>92</sup> of the sweeping out of the remaining sins of the Christian,<sup>93</sup> of standing firm in temptations of all kinds, especially against death and hell,<sup>94</sup> and of the new spiritual judgment in the various situations of life. In this context also, the emotions of the heart, such as peace, happiness, and an inner warmth are by no means irrelevant. All of this is not thought of as a one-time gift, but rather as a gift which is given immediately at the time of justification and is still renewed daily through the Gospel. Consequently, one also may not say that the Lutheran Church is not concerned about the gift of the Spirit. The entire Christian life within the Lutheran Church is certainly saturated and borne by the Spirit, who comes with the Word of God, who does not make himself independent of the Word, and works within us that which the Word says.

### **Justification and Temptation**

Although the Christian justified by faith is a new creature, and has received the gift of the Holy Spirit, he still remains a sinner. On account of God's forgiveness the Christian will certainly be able to master and sweep out sin so that there no longer have to be coarse outbreaks of sin. Yet, he is still endangered, because the sin in him strives to gain mastery and the bad conscience leads to losing sight of Christ, and to seeing only our sins and the accusing law. In this situation, it is necessary to look only to Christ and to ban the Law from the heart, for the remnants of sin are not counted against us for Christ's sake. That is not to be understood as saying that our good works serve as a part of our salvation before God and that whatever still is lacking is forgiven. Even the good works of Christians are, in themselves, still mortal sins since they are incomplete. Much more is it the case that the Christian also in his new life and as a new creature is directed only to the righteousness of Christ and covers himself with the wings of Christ. Anything else would mean that Christ is our savior, only initially and not completely.<sup>95</sup>

Earnest Christians can still have another temptation. To the one who misuses justifying faith or who misunderstands it, thinking that no good works grow from faith, Luther makes it most sternly clear that good works are necessary. Against hypocrites, he can even express it in such a way that good works are necessary in order to enter the heavenly kingdom.

Therefore it is wrong and not to be allowed, as some in ancient times said and as some stupid spirits now say: Although you do not keep the commandment, and do not love God and your neighbor, yea, although you are even an adulterer, that makes no difference, if you only believe, then you will be saved. No, dear mortal, that amounts to nothing; you

<sup>91</sup> WA 40 II, 353, 22ff.; W<sup>2</sup> 5, 508; LW 12, 328f.

<sup>92</sup> WA 2, 567, 7ff.; W<sup>2</sup> 8, 1572; LW 27, 336. See also: "When He has been grasped by faith, then the Holy Spirit is granted on Christ's account. Then God and our neighbor are loved, good works are performed, and the cross is borne. This is really keeping the Law; otherwise the Law remains permanently unkept" WA 40 I, 401, 17-20; W<sup>2</sup> 9, 337; LW 26, 255.

<sup>93</sup> "When by mercy we are free of guilt, then we still need the gift of the Holy Spirit to clean out the remnants of sin in us, or at least to help us lest we succumb to sin and to the lusts of the flesh" WA 40 II, 353, 28-31; W<sup>2</sup> 5, 508; LW 12, 328f.

<sup>94</sup> "But when the heart has thus been justified through the faith that is in his name, God gives them the power to become children of God by immediately pouring into their hearts his Holy Spirit, who fills them with His love and makes them peaceful, glad, active in all good works, victorious over all evils, contemptuous even of death and hell" WA 2, 490, 27-31; W<sup>2</sup> 8, 1434; LW 27, 221.

<sup>95</sup> WA 39 I, 94, 20ff.; LW 34, 163.



will never thus gain heaven; it must come to the point that you keep the commandments, and abide in love toward God and your neighbor. For there it stands briefly determined: 'If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments.'<sup>96</sup>

However, doesn't Luther here, by using the indissoluble connection between faith and works, introduce the necessity of good works for salvation? Does it not lead to the point that a Christian can only be sure of his salvation if he can show good works? The answer to these questions is found where Luther indicates that our salvation lies not in the distant future, but that we are already saved.

How can the words stand, which speak as if we are already saved? .... He who believes in Christ, that already in this moment, everything, and all of his sins are with death and hell gone; so that he does not need anything more for his blessedness than such faith .... Therefore, the whole life which a real Christian leads after baptism is nothing more than awaiting for the revelation of blessedness, that he already has.<sup>97</sup>

Consequently, salvation becomes our own for the first time not on Judgment Day, possibly even after a working together of faith and works, but it becomes our own here and now at the moment that someone believes in Christ. And this present salvation is also the future salvation; the latter will, however, be public, whereas the former is hidden. We are, therefore, now not merely "on probation," but unconditionally saved. Such salvation brings forth fruit. So we, who have now entered heaven without good works, will be revealed on Judgment Day with good works. Therefore, the good works of the Christian can neither save nor make holy, even though they are present. But where they are not present, then it is necessary to grasp Christ.

### **Answer**

It is now time to establish the results of the present exposition of Luther regarding the changes in the doctrine of justification today. Remember this: Edmund Schlink and many others teach that justification is not only "forgiveness and a declaration of righteousness, but also a making righteous and a rebirth."<sup>98</sup> Making righteous and rebirth are thereby understood in the sense of a transformation of the individual through which he is not only considered righteous, but is righteous. As proof that this was also the interpretation of the reformers, Schlink points to the Apology's rendition of the phrase "to become righteous" with "to be new born or become pious," and to Luther's description of justification as the reception of a new, pure heart through faith. As a consequence, the teaching of the Formula of Concord, which understands justification only as the imputed righteousness of Christ grasped by faith is viewed as an "extrinsic abbreviation" of Luther's and the Apology's doctrine of justification.

We have already established that Luther can speak about justification, justifying, cleansing, becoming pious and holy in a wider and a narrower sense. In the narrower sense justification means only the imputation of Christ's righteousness grasped through faith. In the wider sense, Luther uses the terms mentioned in such a way that he combines saving justification together with the Christian's new being and doing, which flow-out of faith. However; as true as it is that this new being and doing comes inseparably out of faith, so it is also true that it does not

<sup>96</sup> WA 45, 146, 38-147,14; W<sup>2</sup> 11, 1701; Lenker 14, 186.

<sup>97</sup> WA 10 I, 1, 107, 7-108,9; W<sup>2</sup> 12, 136; Lenker 7, 150f.

<sup>98</sup> See Lecture I, note 2.

save, not in the least. On the contrary, it is the fruit and work of those who are already saved and blessed.<sup>99</sup>

Luther speaks further of saving faith as the new creature, new birth, or rebirth wrought by God through the Gospel. He understands it as trust in Christ's righteousness, as a laying hold of Christ and thereby a becoming one with Him, as a knowledge which makes the righteousness of Christ its own and believes God when He declares us righteous for Christ's sake. And although this faith can be looked upon as an initial and wholly incomplete fulfillment of the Law, it has no worth by itself, but only insofar as it grasps Christ and his righteousness. Finally, it was shown that the phrases "God purifies our hearts through faith," and "we become pious and holy through faith" cannot in the context of justification mean anything other than that God gives us a heart which recognizes Him as gracious and trusts in Him, and which for Christ's sake has a pure or good conscience which is safe under the wings of Christ.

Consequently, we retain the three parts of justification, of which we had heard in the lecture on the letter to the Galatians: "Faith, Christ; and God's acceptance or imputation."<sup>100</sup> Everything which goes beyond these three parts has nothing to do with saving justification and is very plainly rejected by Luther in this context. One can see his entire activity as professor at the University of Wittenberg from this viewpoint: that he wanted to impress on his students and colleagues that saving justification consists only of these three parts. Neither Melancthon in the Apology<sup>101</sup> nor the Formula of Concord teach otherwise.

If one today speaks of saving justification as forensic and effective justification and thereby understands that in addition to Luther's three parts there is still a fourth part which belongs to justification, namely, an inner renewal and righteousness which is still something other than faith, then the decisive concern which Luther taught Christendom from Scripture is given up. One can surely speak also in Luther's sense of a saving justification as forensic and effective if one understands "effective" in the sense that God works faith through the Gospel which declares the sinner righteous. But that is obviously not meant in the modern discussions of justification as forensic and effective.

It seems to me that the modern interpretation of Luther's position has arisen from reading him in the light of later ideas. Rebirth was understood in pietism above all as the inner renewal and righteousness of man in which faith was very often seen as only an intellectual knowledge. Then, of course, faith alone cannot suffice and one must depend on an inner transformation and righteousness. For Luther this is basically a relapse into the Roman concept of faith and the love which completes faith. For him, faith itself is the inner transformation which is wrought through the Gospel. This inner transformation grasps Christ and thus saves alone, but precisely for that reason cannot do anything else than always, like leaven working in man and moving him to good works. Certainly one must heartily agree with the pietistic concern that the saved Christian is one who serves God from the heart and lives in righteousness before Him even though that righteousness is incomplete. But one will not respond to this concern in Luther's mind, by

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<sup>99</sup> In this differentiation between justification in the narrow sense as saving justification and justification in the broad sense is exactly meant what the Formula of Concord sets forth in the two terms, justification and sanctification.

<sup>100</sup> See Lecture II, note 12.

<sup>101</sup> The controversial passage of Apology IV, 72 cannot be understood in any other way than according to the context of the article. Paragraphs 45 and 62 and following demonstrate that to regenerate means to change from a sinner who is anxious and lost under the Law to a believer who is comforted by the Gospel. This change, which Melancthon also expresses with *iustum effici*, means nothing other than that one grasps the accounting of righteousness of Christ as well as the forgiveness of sins.

including this inner transformation in saving justification, but only by preaching and teaching Law and Gospel, Justification and Sanctification in all clarity.

I close with a passage from Luther in which he develops what for him is the point of issue. It is found in a letter, which he, together with Bugenhagen, wrote to Elector John Frederick of Saxony. This letter contains the opinion of both on a document of unity which Melancthon and Eck had prepared for the religious discussions held in Regensburg on the occasion of the Reichstag in 1541. It is, therefore, in many respects, an important statement of the Reformer.

If one asks through what one becomes righteous before God?, it is entirely another question, than to ask, What the righteous person does or does not do? To become and to do are two different things just as to become a tree and to bear fruit are two different things. Now in this article the question is not about doing or living, but rather about becoming as St. Paul says: 'To become righteous through faith.' There is no doubt that he who has become righteous does not remain without works like a tree without fruit. But the Papists' roguishness is this (which will be found in the following articles), that one becomes or is righteous, not only through faith, but rather also through works or through love and grace which they call inherent<sup>102</sup> (which is all the same). That is all false, for if they have that then they have everything and we have nothing. Because before God nothing has worth, except simply and only His dear son Jesus Christ, who is entirely pure and holy before Him. When He is there, God looks at Him and is pleased by Him (Luke 3). Now the Son is grasped and apprehended in the heart, *not* through works, but only through faith without works. For God says: 'the heart is holy for the sake of my Son, who lives within the heart through faith.'<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> i.e., which are on or in us.

<sup>103</sup> WA Br 9, Number 3616; 407,44-408,61.